England, Church of - Bishops

THE SPEECH OF A Reverend Bishop OF THE CHURCH OF *ENGLAND.* IN DEFENCE OF Themselves and the Government.

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Printed in the Year, 1687.

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MY LORDS,

I Shall not need to speak of the Infamous Course of *Libelling* in any kind. Nor of the *Punishment* of it, which in some cases was *Capital* by the *Imperial Laws*.

Nor how *patiently* some great Men, very great Men indeed, have born the tearing and rending of their Credit and Reputation, with a gentle, nay, a generous mind.

But of all *Libels*, they are most *odious* which pretend *Religion*: as if that of all things did desire to be defended by a *Mouth that is like an open Sepulchre*, or by a Pen that is made of a sick and loathsom quill.

There were times when *Persecutions* were great in the *Church*, even to exceed *Barbarity* it self: did any *Martyr* or *Confessor*, in those times, *Libel* the *Governours*? Surely no; not one of them to my best *Remembrance*: Yet these complain without cause; and in the mean time *Libel* and rayl without all measure. So litle of kin are they to those which *suffer for Christ*, or the least part of *Christian Religion*.

My Lords, It is not every mans *spirit* to hold up

againſt the *Venome* which *Libellers* ſpit. For S. *Ambroſe*, who was a ſtout and a worthy *Prelate*, tells us, not that himſelf, but that a far greater Man than he, that's K. *David*, had found out (ſo it ſeems in his judgment 'twas no matter of ordinary ability) *Grande inventum*, a great and mighty invention, how to ſwallow and put off thoſe bitter *contumelies* of the *Tongue*: and thoſe of the *Pen* are no whit leſs, and ſpread farther: And it was a great one indeed, and well beſeemed the greatneſs of *David*. But I think it will be far better for me to look upward and practiſe it, than to look downward, and *diſcourſe* upon it.

In the mean time I ſhall remember what an *Antient* under the name of S. *Hierom* tells me, *Indignum eſt & præpoſterum*, 'Tis unworthy in it ſelf, and preposterous in demeanour for a man to be aſhamed for *doing good*, becauſe other men glory in *ſpeaking ill*.

And I can ſay clearly and truly, as in the *preſence of God*, I have done nothing as a *Prelate*, to the uttermoſt of what I am conſcious, but with a *ſingle heart*, and with a *ſincere Intention* for the good *Government* and *Honour* of the *Church*, and the maintenance of the *Orthodox Truth* and *Religion* of *Chriſt* profeſſed, eſtabliſhed and maintained in this *Church* of *England*.

For our *Care of this Church*, the upholding of the *External Worſhip of God* in it, and the ſetling of it to the *Rules* of its *firſt Reformation*, are the *cauſes*

(and the ſole cauſes, what ever are pretened) of all their malice againſt us.

For 'tis moſt *apparent* to any man that will not wink, that the *Intention* of *theſe men*, and their *Abetters*, is to raiſe *Sedition*, being as great *Incendiaries* in the *State* (where they get Power) as they have ever been in the Church; *Novation* himſelf hardly greater.

Our main *Crime* is (would they all ſpeak out, as ſome of them do) that we are *Biſhops*: were we not ſo, ſome of us might be as *paſſable* as other men.

And a great trouble 'tis to them, that we maintain that our *Calling* of *Biſhops* is *Jure Divino*, by Divine Right: This I will ſay, and abide by it, that the *Calling of Biſhops* is *Jure Divino*, by Divine Right, though not all *Adjuncts* to their *Calling*. And this I ſay in as direct *oppoſition* to the *Church of Rome*, as to the *Peritan humor*.

And I ſay further, that from the *Apoſtles times*, in all Ages, in all Places, the *Church of Chriſt* was Govern'd by *Biſhops*; And *Lay-Elders* never heard of, till *Calvin*'s new-fangled device at *Geneva*.

Now this is made by theſe men, as if it were *Contra Regem*, againſt the King, in right or in power.

But that's a meer *ignorant ſhift*; for our being *Biſhops Jure Divino*, by Divine Right, takes nothing from the *King's Right or Power over us*. For though

our *Office* be from *God* and *Christ immediately*, yet may we not *exercise* that *power*, either of *Order* or *Jurisdiction*, but as *God* hath *appointed* us, that is, not in his *Majesties*, or any *Christian Kings Kingdoms*, but by and under the power of the *King* given us so to do.

And were this a good *Argument* against us, as *Bishops*, it must needs be good against *Priests* and *Ministers* too; for themselves grant that their *Calling* is *Jure Divino*, by Divine Right; and yet I hope they will not say, that to be *Priests and Ministers* is against the *King*, or any His *Royal Prerogatives*.

Next, suppose our *Callings*, as *Bishops*, could not be made good *Jure Divino*, by Divine Right; yet *Jure Ecclesiastico*, by Ecclesiastical Right it cannot be denyed. And here in *England* the *Bishops* are confirmed both in their power and means, by *Act of Parliament*. So that here we stand in as good case, as the present *Laws of the Realm* can make us. And so we must stand, till the *Laws* shall be repealed by the same *power* that made them.

Now then, *suppose* we had no other string to hold by (I say suppose this, but I grant it not) yet no man can *Libel* against our *Calling* (as these men do) be it in *Pulpit*, *Print*, or otherwise, but he *Libels* against the *King* and the *State*, by whose *Laws* we are established. Therefore, all these *Libels*, so far

forth as they are against our *Calling*, are against the King and the *Law*, and can have no other purpose, than to stir up *Sedition* among the People.

If these men have any other *intention*, or if they have any Christian or charitable desire, to *reform* any thing amiss; why do they not modestly *Petition His Majesty* about it, that in his *Princely Wisdom* he might set all things right, in a *Just* and *Orderly* manner? But this is neither their *Intention* nor *way*. For one clamours out of his *Pulpit*, and all of them from the *Press*, and in a most virulent and *unchristian* manner set themselves to make a *bear* among the people; and so by *Mutiny* to effect that, which by *Law* they cannot. And, by most false and unjust *Calumnies* to defame both our *Callings* and *Persons*. But for *my part*, as I *pity* their rage, so I heartily pray *God to forgive* their malice.

No *Nation* hath ever appeared more jealous of *Religion*, than the People of *England* have ever been. And their *Zeal to Gods glory* hath been, and at this day is a great *honour* to them. But this *Zeal* of theirs, hath not been at all times and in all persons, alike guided by *Knowledge*. Now *Zeal*, as it is of *excellent* use, when it sees its way: so it is very dangerous company, where it goes on in the *dark*. And these Men, knowing the *Disposition* of the People, do labour all they can to mis-inform their *knowledge*, and misguide their

their Zeal, and so to fire that into a Sedition, in hope that they, whom they causlessly hate, might miscarry in it.

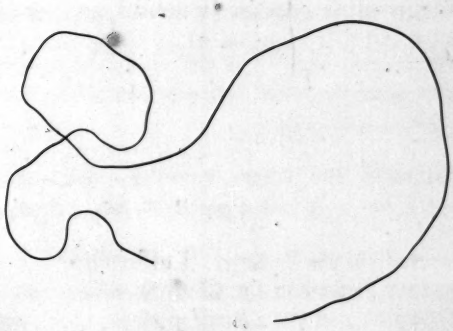
For the main scope of these Libels is, to kindle a Jealousie in mens minds, that there are some great Plots in hand, to change the Orthodox Religion established in *England*, and to bring in I know not what, *Romish Superstition* in the Room of it. As if the External decent worship of God could not be upheld in this Kingdom, without bringing in of Popery.

Now by this *Art* of theirs, give me leave to tell you, that the *King* is most desperately abused and wounded in the minds of his *people*. For there is not a more cunning trick in the World, to *withdraw* the peoples hearts from their *Soveraign*, than to perswade them that he is changing *true Religion*, and about to bring in gross *Superstition* upon them.

For his Majesty. This I know, and upon this *occasion* take it my *duty* to speak: There is no *Prince* in *Christendom* more sincere, both in the *Truth* of the *Religion* here established, and in *Resolution* to maintain it.

And for the Prelates. I assure my self, they cannot be so base, as to live *Prelates* in the Church of *England*, and labour to bring in the *Superstitions* of the *Church of Rome*, upon themselves and it. And if any should be so *fond*, I do not only leave him to *Gods Judgment*, (but if these *Libellers*, or any other, can *discover* that his base and *irreligious* falshood) to *shame* also, and severe *punishment* from the *State*: And in any *just* way, no mans *hand* shall be more, or sooner against him, than *mine* shall be.

For as basely as these men conceive of us, yet I thank *God*, we know our duty well both to *God* and the *King*: And I know that all the *duty* we owe to the *King*, is under God: And our great happiness is, that we live under a *Gracious* and a *Religious King*, that will ever give us leave to serve *God* first, and *Him next*.

I shall end all with a passage out of *S. Cyprian*, when he, then Bishop of *Carthage*, was *bitterly rayled* upon by a pack of *Schismatiks*, *his answer* was, and 'tis now *mine*; They have *railed* both *bitterly* and *falsly* upon *me*, and yet *Non oportet me paria cum illis facere*: it becomes not me to answer them with the like, either *Levities* or *Revilings*, but to *Speak* and *Weep* that only, which becomes *Guardians* [illegible] *G.O.D.*

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